GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETS IN CALGARY

The **IFIP** General Assembly (GA) met 9–10 September in Calgary, Canada, preceded by three days of related meetings. During these five days, discussions took place on a number of significant issues, the most important of which were related to **IFIP** Congresses and publications. In addition, the GA discussed the multitude of **IFIP** technical activities, considered the quality of **IFIP** products, selected new officers, honored members of the **IFIP** community, and observed that the financial situation is satisfactory.

The Alberta chapter of the Canadian Information Processing Society (CIPS) did an admirable job of arranging tours of universities and industrial facilities before the meetings; unfortunately, few participants were able to take advantage of the opportunities. Those able to attend were given excellent presentations on research and development in wireless communication, software engineering, seismic analysis for geological exploration, course preparation for computer-aided instruction, "middleware," and other work that is taking place in Alberta.

Opening Session

Mr. Denis Herard, a member of the Alberta government, welcomed the GA on behalf of the province of Alberta and told how Alberta is positioning itself for the 21st century in the "knowledge industry." He cautioned the assemblage about "information silos," which isolate one group from another. **IFIP** was also greeted by **Mr. Kevin Brown,** the national president of CIPS.

Prof. Asbjørn Rolstadås (N), IFIP's outgoing president, presented his final report to the GA, summarizing his three years in office. Unlike politicians, he reminded the GA of his "campaign promises" and discussed the progress that had been made in achieving his goals. In pursuing the first goal, to serve Member societies, he had visited a dozen of them and discussed **IFIP** with their officers. Although much has been achieved, **Prof. Rolstadås** felt that continual effort is needed. He pointed out that improved relationships with UNESCO and the European Commission had been achieved over the past year. He noted that the strength of Technical Committees (TCs) in **IFIP** has been increased, but that much more needs to be done to bring Working Groups (WGs) closer to the center of **IFIP**. During his tenure, the Secretariat had been moved from Geneva, Switzerland, to Laxenburg, Austria; a contract with a new **IFIP** publisher had been established; and **IFIP** had been installed on the Internet.

Among the problems to be faced, said **Prof. Rolstadås,** are the difficulty in establishing strategic plans for **IFIP** and executing them, making decisions rapidly, and distributing responsibility; lack of continual work between meetings; and establishing a satisfactory mix between academia and industry. He closed by urging the GA to reconsider the role of **IFIP**. In particular, he asked whether **IFIP** should continue to focus its efforts on conferences and proceedings, or whether other products and projects should be considered.

General Assembly meeting in a conference room inside the football stadium of the Calgary Stampeders. (The stands can be seen through the windows.)

Technical Activities

Among the recent **IFIP** conferences discussed at the GA was the World Conference on Computers in Education (see the article on page 1), one of the major conferences sponsored by **IFIP**. This and several other recent **IFIP** conferences had lower attendance than expected. (We note here that MEDINFO '95, the biennial conference of the International Medical Informatics Association, formerly an **IFIP** TC, had an attendance of over 3000.) Despite the contention that all the events were successful from a scientific point of view and that disappointing attendance and low book sales were due to external factors (e.g., poor choice of venue or dates), the results prompted a discussion of the quality of **IFIP** products. **Prof. Martti Tienari (SF),** then chairman of the Activity Management Board, presented a discussion paper that mentioned possible measures of the quality of an event (attendance, number of copies of the proceedings sold, satisfaction of the participants, etc.). A related concern was the apparent decrease in the number of events being planned. Possible explanations are the disruption of record-keeping associated with the recent move of the Secretariat, the decision of some TCs not to sponsor events if **IFIP** does not control the contents of the program, and others. Clearly, these matters merit continuing scrutiny by **IFIP** and increased efforts to ensure that **IFIP** sponsors events and publishes books of only the highest quality.

One new Working Group (WG) was approved by the Technical Assembly (TA): Architectures for Enterprise Integration (WG5.12). Its Aims and Scope will be printed in a future issue of the ***IFIP Newsletter***. In addition, the GA decided to transform the Specialist Group (SG) on Fractals and Chaos (SG15) into a new WG under the TC on System Modeling and Optimization (TC7). Although the TA wants the SG on Foundations of Computer Science (SG14) to be transformed into a TC, that action was deferred by the GA until the membership of the SG conforms to that required of a TC, i.e., not more than one representative for each **IFIP** Member society. Finally, the recommendation of the TA that the task force on Smart Cards be transformed into a SG was accepted.

Mr. Graham Morris (GB), the **IFIP** secretary, reminded the GA that the Austrian government had offered to fund a project in telecommunications (for up to 72 000 Swiss francs) and invited **IFIP** to identify significant problems this project might undertake. Our incoming president, **Prof. Kurt Bauknecht (CH),** is chairing the project steering committee and appointing its members, and **Mr. Plamen Nedkov,** the **IFIP** Administration Manager, will be project manager.

The following topics were also discussed:

- **Prof. Klaus Brunnstein (D),** chairman of the TC on the Relationship between Computers and Society (TC9), suggested that **IFIP** establish an activity concerning the relationship between electronic publishing and intellectual property rights. He is serving as chairman of a panel of experts considering this topic, organized by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). He also proposed activities involving lawyers and information technology, in such areas as copyrights and computer crime.
- **Prof. Jozef Gruska (SK),** chairman of SG14, urged that theory sessions be included in all **IFIP** Congresses. In addition, he requested that **IFIP** establish an award for theoretical results that have found significant applications.